

## **TOWN OF WOODSIDE NEWS**

**JULY 2018**

**NEXT TOWN MEETING: August 21, 2018 at 7 p.m.**

It's again time to update you on what has been going on in Woodside as it's been a busy summer for your Town Council.

As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, we have a NEW Town Charter! This is something that has needed to be updated for years as the last one was done 35 years ago! A few of the major additions were for a more complete process for town elections; a process for annexing properties; making Woodside eligible to collect realty transfer tax fees; revising the number of members required for the town council; and giving the council authority to fine residents who don't abide by the town ordinances.

We learned while working on the Comprehensive Land Plan that Woodside did not have a process for annexing properties. That has now been corrected, so property owners who have part of their property in town and part in Kent County can now start the process of merging their property all into Woodside, if they choose. The council has no immediate plans to annex other properties other than those landowners' who have already expressed interest in doing so. What is the benefit of annexation? The major benefit is that, if you need to obtain permits for upgrading your property, it is much easier to go through the Woodside town council than the Kent County permit process.

Woodside has lost much money over the years when properties were bought or sold, as we had no mention of the realty transfer tax fee in our Charter. That has been resolved with the new update. This means that, when properties are bought or sold, Woodside will now receive 1.5% of the value of the real property as represented by the document transferring the real property, instead of Kent County keeping that money. This will certainly help with the finances of the town.

The Mayor and council have received many complaints over the past year about residents who do not maintain their properties. This includes "junkyards", clutter and litter that is not fenced in, unregistered cars on the property, or not maintaining the yard. With the new Charter, residents can be fined up to \$500 for not abiding by the town ordinances. Residents will first be notified by letter and if no progress is made to resolve the issue, a fine will be determined by the town council and if that is not paid, it will be added to your taxes, which may be deemed as a lien on your property. We prefer that all residents take pride in their property and the town by doing their part in maintaining it. If you need help or have special circumstances that prevents you for maintaining your property, please contact the Mayor or a council member, so a possible solution can be found.

Another achievement has been to have our financial records reviewed by a CPA (certified public accountant) and recommendations made so that Woodside is compliant with state requirements. We were advised to develop a tentative budget, which shows the town expenses and income. That was an eye-opener! We discovered that we do not receive enough income to cover all normal town expenses, so each year our savings dwindle. We found that our Street Aid Fund Money does not cover the entire cost of our street lighting. The State has a formula that determines how much money is allotted for town street lights – we actually received \$2154.99 this year from the State. However, our street lights average \$270 a month! So for the past twelve months, Woodside

spent \$3243.63 for the street lights, meaning the town had to put in over \$1000 to make up the difference.

Our Tax Collector reported that the taxes collected for Woodside amount to approximately \$5800 – that is not sufficient to cover the town expenses and provide services for our town. This year, so far, we have spent over \$7500, which includes paying into the Street Aid Fund and covering expenses for a lawyer's work to update our Charter and to complete the State-required Comprehensive Land Plan. For example, some of the items that have been discussed at town meetings would incur these costs: to hire a state trooper to monitor for speeders costs \$175.50 for only 2 hours! Any work that has to be done to Fleming Street (a town-owned street) comes out of the town's account – including snow removal, sign replacement or paving. We badly need repairs done at the Town Hall – parts of the floor are rotting, we need new flooring in the kitchen, and we need to have the old furnace removed. We talked about having a town clean-up but we had to put it on hold as it would cost over \$1000 and the town cannot afford it.

So what are we to do? First of all, the rental fee for the Town Hall will be increased January 2019 to \$125 from its current rate of \$75 for an entire day. This is still a good bargain! Last year we earned \$1275 by renting out the Town Hall – it helps cover part of the cost for the electricity and insurance on the Town Hall, which amounted to \$2203 in 2017.

Our tax rate has NOT increased in over 25 years and we have the lowest tax rate of any town that I could get information on -- \$0.20 per \$100 of the Kent County Property Assessment rate. Felton charges \$0.90 for each \$100 assessed value and Hartley charges \$0.75 for each \$100 assessed value PLUS they charge a Street Light Tax of \$70 for each property! We cannot provide the services that Woodside needs without an increase. On the town survey last year, the majority of people said "Yes" on having a tax increase, if necessary, to pay for projects we need for our town. Therefore, as of September 2018, our tax rate will be \$0.40 per \$100 of the Kent County Property Assessment, which is still very low compared to other towns. We have 12 properties that are exempt from paying taxes, so the town collects taxes from 113 properties. The current taxes bills in Woodside range from \$1.40 to \$316.40, with an average tax burden being \$51.32.

We are in the final stages of completing the Comprehensive Land Plan. We met with many state agencies on June 29<sup>th</sup> and only a few modifications need to be made and that project should be done this fall! Then we have to start working on updating the town zoning and ordinances – we will need your input on those too.

We have scheduled a Town Meeting for Tuesday, August 21<sup>st</sup> at 7 p.m. at the Town Hall. Please mark your calendar as a reminder to be there. We will have a lot to discuss and plan.

Take time to check out the Woodside Website at <https://woodside.delaware.gov>. Reminders on meetings, the new Charter and events will be posted there. If there is something you would like to see on the Website, please let Brenda know. Should you want to email your town government, our email is [Woodsidede19980@gmail.com](mailto:Woodsidede19980@gmail.com).

**We look forward to seeing all of you on August 21<sup>st</sup>**

Newsletter written by: Brenda Richards, Town Secretary